

**Commissioner's Field Memo Alert**  
**Monday, December 17, 2012**

**RIDE commits to continuing work toward ensuring school safety**

I know that all of us are still in shock regarding the horrible news of the shootings in a Connecticut school last Friday. As details emerge, we will watch and learn from the events in Connecticut, and if there is anything we need to do to update our school-safety procedures in Rhode Island we will do that.

While I do feel confident that we have good procedures in Rhode Island to keep our children safe, I will continue to work with you and with the safety and law-enforcement officials in our state to review current procedures and regulations and to ensure that all of our schools are following procedures on school safety and on lockdown drills. To this end, I will be following the investigation closely, and I have talked with State Police Colonel Steven O'Donnell, with the Office of the State Fire Marshall, with the Police Chiefs Association, with Dr. Michael Fine of the Department of Health, and with Craig Stenning, the Director of the Department of Behavioral Health Care, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals. I will update you about our work as we move forward. We all are committed to working together to keep our children safe.

We at RIDE will also continue to share with you resources we have gathered regarding how to help children who may be troubled or upset when they hear about a shooting incident in a nearby school.

Below is a list of resources, guidance, and references that we have put together for your use. I encourage you to share this

information with school leaders in your district. Some of you have provided us with some of the information on this list, and I appreciate any updates or additions that you might be able to share with us.

## **Emergency Readiness Requirements and Protocols**

### ***Lockdown Drill Requirements***

Rhode Island state law (§16-21-4) requires that every public and non-public school complete 15 emergency drills per year. Of these drills, 2 must be “lock-down” drills. Lockdown drills are the emergency procedures that protect students in the event of a possible threat within the school building.

### ***Lockdown Drill Guidance***

All schools are issued emergency protocol guides by the EMA that govern all types of emergencies. Lockdown protocols require:

- Principal issuance of notification to the staff using a PA or other methods using plain and simple language.
- All students, staff, and visitors are directed into classrooms.
- All classroom doors and windows are locked and, if possible, covered.
- Shut off lights and be quiet.
- All people are moved away from doors and windows.
- No one is allowed outside the classroom until the all-clear signal is given.

### ***Accountability***

All public and non-public schools are required to submit data about their completion of emergency procedures. This information must be submitted to RIDE and to the local fire marshal for review.

### **General School Emergency Planning**

School emergency planning requires collaboration from various stakeholders to maximize the health, safety and welfare of students and staff when confronted with an emergency situation.

To achieve this District Administrators, Principals, Teachers, Students, State Officials, and local Police and Fire Departments must work together to effectively execute a School Emergency Plan that addresses **Readiness, Response, and Recovery**. Because emergencies will involve several agencies, it is important to establish relationships with potential partners before a crisis occurs.

**Readiness:** The process of deciding what you will do *before* an emergency actually occurs.

**Response:** The process of implementing appropriate actions *while* an emergency situation is unfolding.

**Recovery-** The process of assisting people with physical, psychological and emotional trauma associated with experiencing tragic events.

### **Additional Resources for School Administrators**

Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA)

<http://www.riema.ri.gov/schoolsafety/materials/>

Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team

<http://www.bhddh.ri.gov/>

School Crisis/Planning state law

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-21/16-21-24.HTM>

RI Parent's Guide to Children's Mental Health

<http://www.lifespan.org/doc/Page.asp?PageID=DOC020135>

Emergency Management for Schools Web Trainings

<http://www.connectlive.com/events/depteduphilly0207/>

US Department of Education Emergency Planning

<http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/index.html>

Practical Information on Crisis Planning

<http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crisisplanning.pdf>

School & Campus Emergency Management Resources

<http://rems.ed.gov/>

Creating and Updating School Emergency Management Plans

<http://rems.ed.gov/CreatingAndUpdatingSchoolEmergencyManagementPlans.aspx>

Helping Youth and Children Recover from Traumatic Events

<http://rems.ed.gov/HelpingYouthandChildrenRecoverFromTraumaticEvents.aspx>

FEMA

<http://www.ready.gov/>

Information for Administrators

<http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/index.html>

Information for Teachers

<http://www.thriveri.org/documents/School%20Climate%20Teachers.pdf>

Information for Parents

[http://www.thriveri.org/documents/School%20climate\\_Parents.pdf](http://www.thriveri.org/documents/School%20climate_Parents.pdf)

School Emergency Planning Guide PDF.

[http://www.thriveri.org/documents/School\\_Emergency\\_Planning\\_2008.pdf](http://www.thriveri.org/documents/School_Emergency_Planning_2008.pdf)